

Infectious Disease Policy

Purpose

The Mobile County Commission (the County) strives to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees. This Infectious Disease Policy outlines the County's overall response in the event of an Infectious Disease outbreak. It outlines specific steps which may be undertaken by the County to safeguard employees' health and well-being during an infectious disease outbreak while ensuring the County's ability to maintain essential operations and continue providing essential services to the public. Also, it gives guidance on how the County intends to respond to specific operational and human resources issues in the event of an infectious disease outbreak.

Definitions

Infectious Diseases are illnesses caused by germs (such as bacteria, viruses, and fungi) that enter the body, multiply, and cause an infection.

- Some infectious diseases are contagious (or communicable), that is, spread from one person to another.
- Germs carried in the air, water, food, or soil can spread other infectious diseases. They can also be spread by vectors (like biting insects) or by animals.

Epidemic is a rise in the number of cases of a disease beyond what is normally expected in a geographical area.

Pandemic is a global outbreak of disease. Pandemics happen when a new virus emerges to infect people and can spread between people sustainably. Because there is little to no pre-existing immunity against the new virus, it spreads worldwide.

Essential Personnel are those employees whose jobs are vitally important to the County's continued operation, such as first-responders. Other essential personnel may be recommended by department heads and approved by the appropriate elected official or, where appropriate, the county administrator.

Response Levels

The County recognizes three increasing levels of precautionary response to infectious diseases but, at each level, will follow the recommendations, guidelines, and directives of the Governor and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH).

Level I

The World Health Organization (WHO) and/or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has/have declared an epidemic or pandemic, but there is minimal effect locally. The County Administration will implement communications with employees concerning the infectious disease and take precautionary measures to mitigate the spread of the disease, which may include:

- Recommend actions that employees can take to protect themselves outside the workplace and encourage workers to discuss their specific needs with a family physician or other appropriate health or wellness professional;
- Increase the cleaning and sanitizing of work and public access areas;
- Provide sanitizers and germ-filtering masks and gloves to employees and the public as deemed appropriate, if available; and
- Use thermal temperature scanners to identify potential infectious symptoms at security checkpoints for the public and employees.

Level II

At this level, the infectious disease has escalated, the number of cases has increased statewide, and the Governor has declared a health-related state of emergency. Level II will be activated upon the County Commission's approval of a health-related local State of Emergency Declaration.

The County will continue all Level I precautionary measures and take additional actions to minimize or eliminate public contact with County offices and personnel, which may include:

- Close non-essential offices where appropriate social distancing cannot be maintained;
- Cancel or postpone meetings of more persons than recommended by the WHO, the CDC, the Governor, or the ADPH, or make provision for attendance and/or participation telephonically or electronically;
- Temporarily assign some employees to other job duties and/or classifications; and
- Make provisions for employees to work from home where possible, subject to the requirement that they return to their usual place of work when deemed necessary by their department head.

At Level II, the County Commission may approve temporary hazard/pandemic pay, in an amount determined by the Commission, for those employees and/or job classifications, designated by the Commission, whose work responsibilities put them at an enhanced risk of contracting the infectious disease.

Level III

At this level, the infectious disease has escalated to a serious health crisis. Level III will be activated upon approval of the County Commission. The County will take further measures to combat the spread of infectious disease, which may include (but not be limited to) the following:

- Temporarily relieve all non-essential employees of their work responsibilities and pay them their regular pay during this period. Employees will not report back to work until notified by the county administrator;
- Pay essential employees who are required to perform their job-related functions from home and are not required to interact physically or directly with the public or other County employees at their regular rate of pay;
- Pay essential employees who are required to report to their usual place of work temporary hazard/pandemic pay in an amount determined by the Commission.

Only designated essential personnel will work during a Level III infectious disease outbreak unless otherwise notified. If essential personnel become ill or unavailable to work or unable to reach the employee's worksite due to conditions beyond the employee's control, the County may activate back-up arrangements, which may include training and equipping designated personnel to fulfill the duties of unavailable essential employees. Also, the County may provide staff with the resources, including computers and cell phones, needed to work remotely during an ongoing Level III outbreak.

General Provisions

The County strongly urges all employees to maintain up-to-date vaccinations and to obtain annual flu shots, if available, and not medically contraindicated.

Leave

Use of leave as it relates to infectious disease will be governed by Mobile County Commission leave policies in accordance with Mobile County Personnel Board rules. The County Commission leave policies will be superseded by any Mobile County policies or guidelines developed to address leave practices for particular infectious diseases.

Facilities Maintenance

The Facilities and Maintenance Department will coordinate closely with the Custodial Department to maintain County facilities in a sanitary condition. The County strives to use the most current and valid equipment or cleaning methods to guard against the spread of infection in the workplace.

Business Travel

The County will make all reasonable efforts to eliminate the need for travel by taking advantage of technology that allows electronic forms of communication. In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, travel on the County's behalf may be suspended or limited to a select group of essential personnel who have obtained required travel authorizations from the appropriate appointing authority.

Communications

The County partners with local, state, and federal emergency-response and health agencies to ensure compliance with emergency-response protocols.

The County will notify employees of the closing and re-opening of County offices and facilities directly, where possible; through the news media; the County's website and Facebook page; and other means.

Conflicts

To the extent any provision of this Infectious Disease Policy conflicts with federal or state law as may be enacted or amended from time to time, the latter shall control; provided, the non-conflicting provisions of this policy will remain fully effective.

Amendment

This policy may be amended. Further, the County Commission, at its discretion, may declare a change in the precautionary status, a change in type or amount of enhanced pay, a change in those employees eligible to receive enhanced pay, or an end to the state of emergency as it relates to the infectious disease outbreak.